Bilhana

P. SESHADRI, M.A.

Bilhana

AN INDIAN ROMANCE

ADAPTED FROM SANSKRIT

BY

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To

The Hon. Mr. P. S. SIVASWAMI AIYAR, C.S.I.

PREFACE.

THE Italian proverb, *Traduttori, traditori*, brands all translators as traitors, and I have taken care to avoid giving a literal version of the Sanskrit romance of Bilhana on which this poem is based. I have aimed only at a free adaptation of the story, though I have thought it necessary to preserve some of the Oriental ways of expression and have occasionally even given a faithful translation.

This is no place to enter into a discussion of the date and authorship of the Sanskrit poem. It is the work of the poet Bilhana, of Kashmir, who lived about the eleventh century of the Christian era and the romantic episode which forms the subject of the poem is believed to be autobiographical. Numerous versions of the story are current in India and there are several poems on the subject in the vernaculars as well as in Sanskrit. The central theme is however the same in all ; a poet is employed to teach a princess with whom he falls in love ; their secret union provokes the king, who condemns the poet to death ; but he is pardoned in the end and the lovers attain happiness.

The lover's passionate lament when threatened with execution is the most widely known part of the poem ; and it has been translated by Sir Edwin Arnold, as the *Chaurapanchasika*, or the Fifty Distichs of Chauras—the hero has a different name in each version. It were vain to challenge comparison with such a consummate master of English verse as Sir Edwin Arnold. The elaborate digression, moreover, interferes with the unity of the poem and the erotic descriptions are

too frank to bear introduction to the general reader. Much attention has not therefore been bestowed upon this part, and it has been reduced to the limits that could be assigned to it in the usual course of the story.

With Bilhana the love of Beauty amounts to a feeling of religious worship, and the English poet who comes nearest to his genius is Dante Rossetti. The bold defiance of the gods and the invocation to Beauty at the beginning of the poem is unique in Sanskrit literature and is quite significant of his peculiar poetic spirit. As for the quality of his verses, it is enough to say that they have all the grace and felicity of the poetry of Keats, while the sonorous melodies of Sanskrit invest them with additional charm. It is possible again, to see the energy and passionate intensity of Byron, not only in the conception of the plot, specially daring for a Hindu poet, but even in all the details of the poem.

The original is more a lyrical effusion than a verse-tale and has had to be modified in some respects. The plot had to be made more natural and convincing; some of the jewelled exuberance had to be toned down; new details of narration had to be supplied and an attempt had to be made to impart some distinctness to the background. But it is hoped all this has not seriously affected the individuality of the Sanskrit original.

OOTACAMUND,
27th May '14. P. SESHADRI.

Bilhana

The tardy grace of fabled Gods of yore
I scorn to seek; the mighty Triad hold
No meed to lure my Muse. The dreamy Lord
Who rules the lofty world of sacred writ
Has charms for starving saints that haunt the woods
And praying, steep their days in rigid rites.
Benignant Vishnu's power wafts the world
On wings of peace and fortune, laves her shores
In milk and honey—aye, but fails to draw
My willing homage. Siva's dreaded ire
Entombed fair Kāmadev, it blew to dust
His soul-enthralling form,—and let that Lord
Of Death command his dismal train of ghosts
And shapeless creatures groping in the gloom
Of sable night. The Muse now speeds in joy
To other realms: of Love that drinks its fill
Of sustenance, the instant hungering hearts
Awake to Light; of Beauty's magic spell
That claims obeisance low from all mankind;
She sings of souls ethereal whose hearts
Blossom to love and all its ecstasy;

Upbear their life fragile, through hail and storm,
Whelmed in by wicked mortals; then, the stress
Is o'er, their petals ope again to breathe
The heaven on earth.
Beyond the golden mount
Of Heavenly Mêru, the abode of Gods,
In Northern Ind, there spread the spacious clime
Of fair Panchãla. Wisdom never knew
A sweeter home; the Arts bedecked her brow
In matchless splendour; Virtue shed her grace
On every son and daughter drawing breath
Within her bounds. The Roof and Crown of earth
She shone in deathless fame. A queenly city rose
Within the realm and held her sovereign sway
O'er all the mighty land; her very name
Bespoke her glory—was she not the Home
Of Lakshmi, of the deity lotus-born
Whose lovely smile could rain the marvelled wealth
Of empires, sweeten life with countless gifts
Of happiness? A gracious monarch held
The sceptre, Madan, bold in war, a prince
Of matchless fame who worshipped as his own
The worlds of Song and Art. Blessed was his queen,

The partner in his toils of state and joys
Of life, Mandāra, fair, sweet and pure ;
A spotless lily, she adorned her lord
In guileless passion ; robed in light divine
She sanctified her home. Their wedded life
Of felicity found its highest wealth
In Yāmini Thilaka, the lovely child,
With whom her parent's wish was ever law,
A paragon of beauty, sweet beyond
All human praise. She blossomed into youth,
The fairest flower that grew on earth ; her speech
Was rapturous song and like the gentle swan's
Her gait ; her eyes of wondrous lustre, bright
Like those of fleet gazelles that roam the woods ;
Her queenly bust bespoke a noble maid
Of mighty lineage ; the lips of rose
Enclosed a pretty mouth which often oped
In dimpled laughter, gay and free. The face
Shone like the full-orbed moon, and curls that waved
In gentle motion coyly bent anon
To kiss its grace.

The father's anxious care
Was now the proper fashioning of her mind ;
Her soul had flowed in sweetest harmony
To music's million charms and felt the thrill

Of every note and strain, had known the art
In all its mystery, till man or book
Could bring no higher dower. But the world
Of Poesy, of verbal witchery
In trope and figure, Drama's play of soul,
And all the virtue of the written page—
Her vision had not swept the magic shore.
The monarch drew his minister to his side
And spake the purpose : "Yamini's heavenly form
Would tempt a saint—a shame that such a thought
Should touch her father's mind—but oh, how true!
Which favoured son of learning in this realm
Shall hold in honest trust the virgin soul
And fill her mind with largesses I seek ?
Which vision rest upon her lovely face
And yet have mind to hunt the crabbèd page
And care to win its lore ? Which heart of flint
Shall keep unmoved and free when brought anear
Her mystic spell ?" The grey-haired lord that served
His master's will in loyal faith and sought
His plaudits in the world, as highest gifts
That lay within the sphere of man—he gave
His ready counsel : " Are Panchāla's homes

Bereft of lettered men that would await
Their royal master's need with zest, discharge
The task in dread obedience? 'Tis done
My lord, to-morrow's eve the palace hall
Shall boast of all the galaxy of men
With lore, that tread this spacious city; seers
Of splendid vision, Brahmin saints who hold
Within the hollow of a sunken palm
The wisdom of a thousand ages, minds
Replete with every thought inscribed upon
The scroll of knowledge." Forth, the mandate flew
For men of light to gather in their force
And wait the royal pleasure. Evening spread
Her sable wings and Madan sat in state,
To hail the great assembly, know its gifts,
And choose the best to hold the office. Each
Advanced his claim:—A subtle reasoner
Was one, that could in hundred ways pursue
A single thought and split a single thought
In hundred fragments. All the wealth of Speech
A second beat to shapeless form, to Roots
And Letters, traced their life from hour to hour.
The sacred tomes that chronicle the deeds
Of countless gods, a third had made his own.
There was the scholar who could solve with ease

The deepest mysteries of Soul and God;
The master of the Vêdas, with each sound
In proper accent, holding in his brain
Their myriad lines; he could outpour the words
From first to last, and then if need there rise
From last to first; of Brahmin ritual,
Of holy worship in its varied forms
And minute parts, a priest lay honest claim
To perfect knowledge; wrangling schools of thought
Had there their skilful fencers in debate.
The Brahmins ceased their speech and Madan spake
Like one, that wandering on a distant way
Looks down a well for crystal waters pure
To slake his thirst and finds a barren bed
Of rock: "Does not this wide assembly count
The blessed race of poets, lyric souls
Who could enrich my lovely daughter's mind
With Song and Art? Has Nature ceased to breathe
Her fire in man, have all the glorious joys
Of earth proved vain to ope his sleeping eyes
To Beauty, bear his soul on fancy's flight
To worlds of endless felicity? Alas,
That men pursuing dull Philosophy

Should miss in thoughtless ignorance the sweets
Of life?" The Brahmins bent their hoary heads
And said in plaintive notes: "The world of song
Is not of ascetics, whose only care
Is service of their Heavenly Lord, penance
And fasting in His glory; nor of minds
That ever toiling sound the inmost depths
Of knowledge. Poesy wooes the young, the minds
Imbued with taste, the gifted souls awake
In over-flowing love and open wonder
To all the finest pulses on the chords
Of God's Creation. From our paths she flies
Even as buxom maidens loathe to wed
The feeble grey-haired dolts in whom the glow
Of manhood has been chilled; or else as we
The priestly class flare down our scorn
Upon the lowest caste of men, whose touch
Is curst pollution."

"And belike you know
At least as darkness knows the light it strives
In vain to reach, the person that could serve
My need," the monarch spoke and answer came,
Not from the hoary scholars in the front
Intent upon their priestly lore, but far behind
From youths that only hoped for fame in time,

New pilgrims from the shrines of Knowledge, fresh
From offered incense at the altar, minds
Not yet oblivious to joys of life:
"We know a noble bard whose soul is song,
Bilhan, divinely fair in form and mind,
Monarch of poets, dreaming in his sphere
Of golden fancies, first among his line
Of craftsmen. Spring is sweetest in the year;
The jasmine in the world of flowers; flight
Is speediest and aim the most devoid
Of fault in arrows blooming on the crown
Of Kama's quiver; fragrance draws its breath
In finest essence from the musk; the gift
Of speech is blazoned forth in matchless form
When called to pour its rays of scorching light
On error prest with reason's show; man's life
Is happiest and most envied in youth;
His heart most nobly blessed with woman's love;
With equal truth be it assured, the world
Of poesy knows no name of greater might
Than Bilhan's. When the royal mandate sped
For lettered men, perchance the youthful bard
Was lost in raptures of a song, or mused
Alone upon some scene of loveliness
That hides her witching face beyond the bounds

Of this our bustling city. Sore now sighed
Madan, as one that failed to stretch his arms
When hoards of treasure lay unclaimed. He waved
The scholars home and sent the speedy word
That Bilhana was welcome at the court;
The king himself desired the felicity
Of talk and friendly greetings with the bard.
With dawn the sovereign was upon his throne;
He sat in eager wait, and Bilhan came
Like the Preceptor of the Gods that turns
His sacred feet towards the heavenly court
Of Indra, passing through the lofty gates
Of gold. The sentinels had once refused
Entrance, when as an unknown youth he sought
The royal presence and were stung by words
Of bitter sarcasm but they now beheld
In awe the poet come, an honoured guest
To court. With grace and kindness beamed the king,
And fain would know the story of the bard
Who looked an angel in a world of men.
Bilhan had spent his years of toil in the halls
Which royal benevolence had upreared
To Knowledge in the stately capital;
And ere he fared his homeward way again,

He lingered o'er the beauties of the place,
The thousand sights which filled his heart with joy
And wonder; felt in every pulse the glow
Of life and gave it leave to have its turn.
With rapture Madan scanned his form and saw
In every limb the God of Song. He gave
His glowing praise to all the priceless wealth
His gifted mind treasured in simple ease;
The royal coffers flowed as ne'r they flow'd
To honour men. A thousand gifts bestow'd
The king; a mansion now was Bilhan's own;
All worldly riches thus to wealth of mind
Were join'd. In secret council sat the king
And sought his trusted minister's aid: "Was there
Ever such marvel of a man; in form
Like Kāma himself; versed in arts of song
Like Guru, lord of every spoken word
In Heaven. But oh! this care now clouds my mind:
Which maid could face his charms with steelèd heart
And keep her soul untouched by thoughts of love?
Which father bring such loveliness divine

So near his daughter's view, if speedy love
And union were not his wanton aim?
The valued wisdom of his mind has found
No sober habitation, but a form
Of tempting beauty, meant to rouse in hearts
Of even holiest fire, delicious thoughts
Of sweet amour and wanton dalliance;
And like a blossom of the Kalpaka
Which lures a myriad bees in buzzing search
Of honied essence, oh! his form would draw
The hearts of women in enraptured love,
And bear them on the wings of ecstasy;
It is no trifling folly to lay bare
The guileless fancies of a virgin soul
To all this poet's witching world. Alas,
But is it not like losing untold wealth
To miss his aid in fashioning the mind
Of one who is to us the very crown
Of earthly felicity? Thy subtle wit
Was ever known to grasp in faultless reach
The gravest problems of my home and state;
A deep and ceaseless stream, no eyes have caught
It dry; and who will doubt, it knows a way
To take us even through this stress, to keep
The precious prize without the haunting fear
Of gloomy spectres flitting on the stage

Of distant time." He spoke, and sat enwrapped
In solemn thought. A thousand schemes now flashed
Upon the minister's mind ; with close-knit brows
He scanned them all and his countenance was bright
And sad by turns, as pathways oped and closed
Before his vision ; till at last he gave
His words of deep import in reasoned steps :
"'Tis clear the beauties must not blaze to flame ;
They must be held in leash, apart, though near ;
Unmeet it is for servile watchman eyes
To keep a zealous guard on them. Perchance
Even a silken screen fragile may serve
To partition their worlds, if wisely drawn
And kept in place by sense of fear, or else,
Better—by pious vows. 'Tis here,—I have it whole!
You know the mystic rites the princess pays
To Sūrya, chief of heavenly orbs, the God
Whose worship hath a cult among our priests ;
'Tis known at morn her fervent prayers rise
To hail the sun ; each eve a thousand lights
She sets ablaze in honour of his power ;
They shed their dazzling radiance upon
The city from our castled walls. Three years

Her penance lasts, begun when Vasant beamed
His smile of flowers on earth this year.
On curious vows she hath resolved—no man
Devoid of light shall cross her path, before
Her sacred duties reach their fulfilment.
The hapless soul in whom the ray of heaven
Is quenched—the very sight is now to her
Pollution's touch. The city roads have oft
Been cleared of sightless men by beat of drum,
When forth her jewelled palanquin of pearl
Sallied in state beyond the palace gates
For worship at the shrine. You see the star
That glows within this maze :—A lie and all
Is done. Proclaim to her that Bilhana,
The greatest bard a royal father's care
Could seek for enriching her mind, has lost
His sight beyond all hope ; a screen shall stand
Between them at their lessons ; and her vow
Shall hold without a break. And as for him,
Another lie shall keep his mind in dread
Of rudeness to the veil :—The Princess fears
A dismal streak of loathsome leprosy
Is slowly spreading on her face, and hence
Desires some privacy ; a near view
At least she likes to guard against." The king
Gave heed with rapt attention, lost in joy

Of prospects gained and poured a flood of praise
Upon the trusted and omniscient lord
Whose craft unravelled every tangled knot
With ease, or bound with iron strength the threads
Of deep-laid plans. The mandate shaped with care
Now reached the poet's home. The princess learnt
Her father's will and longed with glowing heart
For unknown worlds to open on her mind
At Bilhan's bidding. Madan spake in pride
About his schemes of wisdom to his queen,
Who smiled her gentle smile and sweetly asked
If years of faithful love had proved in vain
To place *her* precious child beyond the pale
Of morbid suspicion? Was there the need
For all the lies two hoary heads evolved
In secret council? Was a daughter born
Of queen Mandāra proper aim for thoughts
Of doubt? Her virtue was a coat of mail,
Of stronger power than laws of kings or guiles
Of grey-haired ministers. The calm rebuke
Was lost in Madan's speech: "The old, perchance
Have oft displayed a flesh-consuming care
In ordering their lives—but better far

Than reckless faith of youth that leads the world
To peril's brink. The walls are there upreared
Against our mortal foe; if there be none
To-day, they serve to-morrow; if none at all,
It is because their terror holds." He sought
The Brahmin priests who knew the subtle flow
Of stars. They read the mystic scroll and scanned
Their baffling path to catch the lucky hour
To start the poet's work. The moment came,
And prayers rose for Brahma's spotless spouse,
Saraswati who rules the world of speech.
The mighty bard who sang the glorious deeds
And triumphs of that ancient Solar prince
Who bridged the raging waves to reach his love
And crush the wicked foe whose guilty soul
Had wrought her pain, his muse was next invoked;
It was a day of festive joy for all;
The royal presents flowed with lavish hand;
And blessings poured on lovely Yāmini
For ever-growing wisdom. Bilhana
Now sought the palace walls each day, as noon
Mellowed to early eve and gently roused
His fount of song and wonders of the mind,
To feed the thirsting soul of Yāmini,

Till shades of gathering darkness saw him home
To muse in fondness on the joyous work
His favoured days had found for him. The hours
Were fraught for her with deep import;
She grasped with lightning speed the varied lore
That Bilhana revealed from day to day—
Till her preceptor wondered ere a year
Had passed, what newer worlds his mind could draw
For her. She knew the quintessence of song
And all the forms in which the poets decked
The muse; the monuments of mind which bards
Had fashioned for the world were hers. The science
Of wealth and polity acclaimed by all
The wise as harbinger of felicity
For men had become hers, and now there passed
Before her vision plays designed for Love
That flashed their spotless bliss across the stage;
The crystal purity of laws of song
She learnt to feel at every turn; the art
Of love as bodied forth in books, her mind
Beheld in joy—the princess passed the bard
In all such wisdom and his gifts of lore
Outgrew in fruit when planted in her mind.
A train of golden fancies filled her mind

Till glowing with the joy she longed for them
In life. Her dreams now kept her company
All day and night; and lounging on her bed
Of ivory, behind the silken wall,
She mused on all the happy loves whose course
Was chronicled in books of song. Her ears
Were wide awake for sound of sweet footsteps
That brought the lyric soul whose presence chimed
With entrance into realms of untold bliss—
For did not Bilhan speak of wondrous things
Each day, of joyous tales of love that bathed
Her heart in heavenly radiance? He drew
Her sighs for one that languished on the hills
For touch of her he loved and sought to reach
Her through a cloud that swam across the skies;
The tale of woe was not in vain. And now
It was a maid that lived her life beneath
The shelter of a sage's forest home,
In virgin freedom, till she found a royal heart
That flowed to her in love. But oh, the ring
Which was their symbol of communion
She lost; her princely lover knew her not;
A nameless stranger at the palace gates,
She strove in vain to wake the memories
Of old, and flash them on the monarch's mind,

Till voices from the heavens declared her true.
And now the tale is changed—another came
To Kāma's grace with sweet and sudden steps;
She sought her downy bed in peace one night
And woke to find a prince had been with her;
The princess drew the hero of her dream
And royal embassies that sped from state
To state, approached the lover and their hearts
Were joined in holy wedlock's union.
There was again that princess pure in faith
Who sought a hermit's presence every day;
Her tender arms upbore a golden plate
Of daily offerings of flower and fruit;
She prayed and coyly asked a boon, to wed
A warrior of mighty prowess; lo!
The hermit dropped his guise, the happy prince
She long had loved, now grasped her in his arms.
It was a dismal void for Yamini,
When Bilhan turned his homeward way at fall
Of night. The stars that flowered in the skies
And even the dazzling glory of their queen
Her vision left in chill obscurity,
And tossing on her sleepless bed she longed
For love to cheer her life. When would its light
Illume her days? A lover pour his tale
Of passion in her ears, or seek a cloud

Trailing across the heavens to speed his words?
Some king of matchless greatness care to seek
Her hand? In patience would she bear
The cruel curses of a Fatal Ring,
If the same bliss were hers at start and end.
Perchance some prince that hailed from unknown lands
Was flying on his wingèd magic horse
That very night, towards her storied hall,
To light upon the marble floor and turn
His wondering eyes to her. Was there anear
To her an unknown lover? The thoughts were vain,
The leaden moments weighed upon her heart
And caused it ceaseless pain. Two years had passed,
They formed a music strain to Bilhan's soul
And roused its sweetest harmonies. Far more
Than in the worlds of song was there in her
Felicity supreme.

It was a night
In *Sarath* time; resplendent shone the moon
And as he poured his learned talk, the bard
Beheld in sudden joy the jewelled orb
That shimmered through the window's gilded bars

And calmly rose to view. His soul now burst
In rapturous praise of the effulgent moon.
He spoke his words—it was the wont for them
To form a song for lovely Yamini,
To draw her lyric sweetness: "Queen of light,
Touching the eastern skies with rosy bloom,
You strike with anguish parted lovers; thrill
The seas with joy; the lotus droops its head;
The lily bares its hidden wealth; the heavens
Reveal a world of spacious breadth enrobed
In silver hues; and lovely Kama speeds
In pride, upon his thousand victories.
Sovereign star, the poet's fancy oft
Hath seen mysterious forms in dusky spots
That tinge your heart.—It is a spreading tree,
The bard hath said, or else, a hare or deer;
But oh, it is the void creation's lord
Hath caused by robbing you of nectar lodged
Within your breast, to sweeten his love's lips.
Vishnu reclining on the swelling sea
Is there; behold the stary spray, the wide
Expansive blue, that buoys Him on his bed;
What tales have poets woven round the spot!
It is the mole of luck; the muddy crust
Enwashed by ocean waves, the frisking deer;
The shadow of the earth; the sapphire piece

That Indra loves to wear ; but as I see,
The mass of darkness swallowed by the moon.
The gate for Kama's passage to the earth
On mission of enthralling man, she rains
The sweet affliction on the lover's heart.
Is she a white petalled lotus flower
That springs in stately beauty in a pond
Of deep blue waters? Eve's bejewelled ball
That bounds in sport towards the ærial vault
At dusk? The magic stone on which the darts
Of Kāma win their poignant, smiting edge?
It was on such a night that Krishna sought
The scented grove on Jamna's banks, to meet
His love, who stole from home and lay in wait
For sweet embrace. On such a night again,
Did Usha feel her princely lover's touch
When all within the palace lay in silence hushed.
Maiden of lotus eyes, behold, the moon
Hath cast her lovely mantle on the earth
In witching splendour. Will you close your life
To all this beauty, ?" asked the bard, his brows
Glowing with poetic fire. His passion roused
Yamini, her whole being rushed to meet
The singer's heart. Could blindness ever view

The moon with thrilling rapture, sing her praise
In moving language? Has such wonder been
In all this world, and whence this happening?
The myth is all my father's crafty tale—
The veil shall vanish at my anxious touch,
Despite my sacred vow; it cannot be
The Gods will frown upon this act of mine;
His lofty soul is proof to all the world
Of sin, and with good Bilhan must be heaven.
Her lily arm withdrew the silken screen
And lo, there was the handsome bard who looked
Upon her form with eyes of wondrous lustre
And saw her beauty flash like lightning's glow.
"Was this the angel wickedness belied,"
Each thought of other. As she sweetly bent
Adown to hide her blushes, Bilhan strained
Her slender figure in his arms and felt
A wakening rapture claim her all his own.
His being rushed to press her rose-bud lips—
It was a happiness beyond all dreams;
The gates of bliss now poured their wealth of light
Upon the lovers drowned in sacred rites
Of Love. And now to them the world was naught,
Receding like a murmuring wave, to seek

A distant shore, beyond all human ken.
Their lives had found the highest heaven on earth ;
The golden dreams of sweet romance now stood
Revealed in crystal shape; and thence their days
Were such that song of hallowed fire could draw
Its vital, moving breath from them, and blaze
To glorious form. " Now doth my soul of song
Awake to find the sordid world enrobed
In joy divine," the poet exclaimed each hour.
The lovers closed their minds to yawning gulfs
That royal wrath may ope beneath their feet ;
They kissed the blossoming flower unaware
Of thorns that lurk, or bees that hide their sting
Within its perfumed walls of tender touch ;
Basking on sunny banks of spring, the storm
That lowered on the distant skies to break
Its fury on their heads escaped the view ;
The secret tale of love now slowly wound
Its way towards the monarch's ears through maids
That quailed in fear to see their virgin charge
Bespoiled, touched in sin by alien hands ;
And like a wounded lion, the father rose
In blinding wrath: " The wicked souls shall die
And rid themselves of sin in burning Hell,"

He gasped in ire, and summoned forth the child
That was his pride, and now had wrought the taint
Upon his house. And like a tender dove
That cowers at the dreaded kite's approach,
She sought the monarch's presence, head bent down
In sorrow for her lord, whose very life
Now lay exposed to royal wrath. These words
The father spoke in shame and bitter anguish:
"Was it that thou hadst not a kingly sire
To call an assemblage of princely youths
Of noble lineage, valorous in war
And famed for form, to bestow thee for wife
On him that met your choice in eye and mind,
That thou hast sought the ragged bed
Of Brahman rhymesters, basely sprung in life,
Unmindful of the blood that gave you breath.
The seeds of grovelling impurity
Thy hands have sown and they will grow in time
To make my house a shame to all the world."
"All blame is thine my lord," she gently said,
"If bringing souls to untold bliss is blame;"
You brought us near, we saw and only loved;
I met the noblest soul on earth, my being

Rushed forth to him in furious, hungering love
And all was happiness." In rage he cried,
"No more this sweetening of coarsest wrong;
Thy wicked prattling only flaunts thy sin
To greater infamy, the blazing flame
Will shed its lurid light to farther ends.
A father's instinct saves thy tainted life
To leave it lingering in long penance,
But he that lured thy guileless heart to vice
Shall expiate his secret villainy
Within the jaws of death."
"'Tis I my Lord,
That was the temptress, all thy royal vengeance
Should aim its dart at me, the root and cause
Of all this ill to noble Bilhana
Who owns me now, my very senses all;
With him, my fateful tale now ends on earth."
"Shall little urchins preach to hoary lords
Their kingly duties? Raise their voice against
Their mandates? Ere the mellowed sun shall seek
His golden couch this night, the hangman stops
The villain's sinful breath."
"The shades of night,"
She murmured as he passed, "will plunge me deep

In Death and leave you childless on your throne,
To dispense justice like an Iron King
And shackle hearts in written laws of priests
And fools." The bitter words unheeded fell,
The hapless maiden languished on her couch,
Aware of nothing save her cursed fate
Which snapped the chain of bliss on earth for ever.
Mandàra sued her husband's grace and sought
To calm his anger ; their own tale of love
Bore not the severe mould of wedlock's law,
Or plaudits of their parents. Was she not
A petty chieftain's daughter raised to share
A mighty throne, because his youthful eyes
Avowed her fair ? Let birds that sang the hymn
Of marriage on that lovely morn in spring,
When with the freedom of a rushing flood
They met, within the lonely champak bower
Upon the margin of the lotus lake
To become man and wife,—let them declare
The truth. Which father blessed the union ?
Which greedy priest drawled out his sacredness
In mystic murmurs praying gods to bear
Witness ? Had not his constant pleadings wrung
His father's slow consent, their stolen bliss
Confirmed by late approval ? And shall they now

Deny such gentle pardoning in turn,
To her, their only child? "The world will go
To nameless ruin, if statesmen ever heed
A woman's siren tongue"—he roared in scorn
And sternly bade her in.
As evening flapped
Its dusky wings for spreading flight, they led
The poet ruthlessly to death in chains
Of hardest steel. Beyond the city's bounds,
Anear a shrine to Kali's dreaded power
The grim assembly stood in speechless awe;
The hangman wore a saddened look this time,
Though oft the lurid sun had seen him ply
His hireling sword with quick-deciding strength,
Felling the brawniest to grovelling earth.
The hapless lover mused in pain, and saw
In trembling fear, the gloomy scowl of Death,
The fiendish monster that had raised his hand
Of iron might to snatch his cup of bliss;
But brightened oft at cheerful thought of her,
The stainless angel of his heart. "My soul
Knows naught of sorrow's touch, illumed with light
Of holiest love," he said, when shaking heads
Would rudely fathom such a secret joy.
Ere death soon plunged him down to abysses

Of speechless agony, or what perchance
Was worse, to darkening oblivion
And empty nothingness, his dreamy eyes
Would range in raptures o'er the fleeting past
And catch its lingering joy. In rushing speed
Now flowed delicious memories; he quaffed
Again their nectared sweetness, poring o'er
His foredoomed tale of love. "I have enshrined
Within the golden temple of my heart
The Goddess of the lotus eyes. Her form
Of heavenly mould now sweetly floats upon
My vision, beaming beauty as she wakes
From sleep. Like long-lost knowledge speeding back
In sudden swelling flight, she fills my mind
With bliss intoxicant. The full-orbed moon
Swims not in greater glory up the heavens
Than she within my sight; her radiant youth
Is dower which goddesses may like to own
And love. Her luscious lips I seek again
Like hungry bee that buzzing darts on flowers
For honey. I have e'er adored her love
As life's most sacred gift, beyond compare
With even all the learning of the world.
Behold her beauteous face in fresher form,
With sweet averted look when gently vexed,

Her ruffled spirits calming then to joy.
My head is pillowed even at this hour
Upon her bosom's tenderness ; the hands
Are locked in sweet embrace, or linger round
The golden girdle worked in stone and pearl
That greedily clasps her waist, enfolding close
Her wayward robes of foam-spun silk ; or play
In childish freedom with her raven curls
Of glossy smoothness—such a life of bliss
Be mine all waking moments, and my soul
Be unaware of even highest worlds
Of Heaven, if this were not my share."
The hardened minister was there to guard
The hangman's work, to bring the king's commands
To painful fruition. Compassion's tear
Had ne'er bedimmed his eyes, but why was it
A cloud now sat upon them and his heart
Was quickening forth to pulses new? He loathed
To speed the murder, for his soul was now
A flood of pity rushing forth to drown
The helpless bard in kindliness? Was there
A muffled voice that whispered low to him—
He was the distant cause of all that tale
Of tragic love. The sin of rending hearts

Apart will brand his crafty, wrinkled brow
With infamy, if from that tangled maze
His crooked wisdom caused, the painless way
Remained unfound? When passions calmed to peace
Will Madan fail, to scan his share of guilt
And scorn his boasted craft which had declared
The end was safe? And was it statesmanship
To blight a daughter's happiness with fate
Of tainted widowhood? How could he bear
The lover's cry of anguish—Hark! he speaks
Again, his silver voice now breaks the calm
Of evening—" The dying moments come
And I shall never sigh or groan to see
My form dissolved to primal elements—
The dreadful end must close on all. But God,
This be the only prayer on my lips,
That ever after leaving mortal worlds,
This body mine, be dedicate to serving her:
As air my fortune be to fan her face,
As water fill the envied lotus tanks
That shall be hallowed by her touch; as light
Illume her habitation and as earth
But feel her gentle tread." He stops and forth
The tears swell from all the gathered crowd;
The minister sternly bids the hangman stop

His cruel task, exclaiming "I will be
A ragged beggar trudging in the streets
Than hold my office after such a wrong,
And proffer council to my king." Post-haste
He sought his master's presence, where the queen
Was pouring forth her anguish for the child,
Imploring pardon. Pain had thawed his ire
To pity. Calmly rooted to his throne
He pilloried his judgment, wondering
If it were wisdom's way, to cause a world
Of misery where might be perfect bliss—
To see his daughter wane away to death,
His loving queen with her and himself lose
All joy in life, immured in living death.
Shall not his kingly power stem the tide,
And save his happy home? The minister rushed
To tell his tale of how the deed was stopped
And Madan joyed the way was open still,
To change the gloom to radiant light. The lord
Could swear no sin of wanton youth was there,
But love of holiest purity, and waxed
With warmth for quick repeal of what had passed
His lips. No need was there for further doubt
Or thought. The speech gave sinew to his will
And brought the monarch's mind to action's
point.

Messengers flew with tidings to the poet ;
Relieved of torture sprang the queen and sought
Her daughter's side with sustenance to feed
Her drooping soul ; and from her death-like swoon
The princess rose to second life, when laid
Upon her mother's lap, the news was breathed
Within her ears ; and as her eyes beheld
Her lover's palanquin now sway its course
Towards the palace-gates, she darted down
To meet her lord and all was endless joy,
And blessedness. Past all the stormy seas,
They found a haven lit with perfect bliss.

ERRATA.

Page 3, line 2	*for* fair, sweet,	*read* fair and sweet.
Page 6, line 5	*for* there rise	*read* arose.
Page 6, line 8	*for* lay	*read* laid.
Page 20, line 21	*for* stary	*read* starry.

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